

PALATINE HILL.

A wolf-like stream without a sound
Steals by, and hides beneath the shore,
Its awful secrets evermore
Within its silent bosom sound.

And this was Rome, that shrieked for room
To stretch her limbs! A hill of caves
For half-wild beasts and hairy slaves;
And gypsies tent within her tomb!

Two lone palms on the Palatine,
Two rows of cypress, black and tall,
With white roots set in Caesar's hall—
A garden, convent and a sweet shrine.

Tall cedars on a broken wall,
That look away toward Lebanon,
And seem to mourn for grandeur gone;
A wolf, an owl—and that is all.

—Joquin Miller.

THE MISADVENTURES OF JOHN NICHOLSON.

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED.

We have seen John in nothing but the stormiest conditions. We have seen him reckless, desperate, tried beyond his moderate powers; of his daily self, cheerful, regular, not unthrifty, we have seen nothing; and it may thus be a surprise to the reader to learn that he was studiously careful of his health. This favorite preoccupation now awoke. If he were to sit there and die of cold, there would be mighty little gained; better the police cell and the chances of a jury trial, than the miserable certainty of death at a dike-side before the next winter's dawn, or death a little later in the gas-lighted wards of an infirmary.

He rose on aching legs, and stumbled here and there among the rubbish heaps, still circumscribed by the yawning crater of the quarry; or perhaps he only thought so, for the darkness was already dense, and the snow was growing thicker and he moved like a blind man; and with a blind man's terrors. At last he climbed a fence thinking to drop in to the road, and found himself staggering, instead, among the iron furrows of a plowland, endless, it seemed as a whole country. And next he was in a wood, bounding among young trees; and then he was aware of a house with many lighted windows. Christmas carriages waiting at the doors, and Christmas drivers (for Christmas has a double edge) becoming swiftly hooded with snow. From this glimpse of human cheerfulness he fled like Cain; wandered in the night, unpiloted, careless of whither he went; fell, and lay and then arose again and wandered further; and at last, like a transformation scene, behold him in the lighted jaws of the city, staring at a lamp which had already donned the tilted night-cap of the snow. It came thickly now, a "feeding storm," and while he yet stood blinking at the lamp, his feet were buried. He remembered something like it in the past, a street lamp crowned and caked upon the windward side with snow, the wind uttering its mournful hoot, himself looking on, even as now; but the cold had struck too sharply on his wits, and memory failed him as to the date and sequel of the reminiscence.

His next conscious moment was on the Dean bridge; but whether he was John Nicholson, of a bank in California street or some former John, a clerk in his father's office, he had now clean forgotten. Another blank and he was thrusting his pass-key into the lock on his father's house.

Hours must have passed. Whether crouched on the cold stones or wandering in the fields among the snow, was more than he could tell; but hours had passed. The finger of the old clock was close on twelve; a narrow peep of gas in the hall lamp shed shadows, and the door of the back room—his father's room—was open and emitted a warm light. At so late an hour all this was strange; the lights should have been out, the doors locked, the good folk safe in bed. He marvelled at the irregularity, leaning on the hall table, and marvelled to himself there; and thawed and grew once more hungry. In the warmer air of the house.

The clock uttered its premonitory catch. In five minutes Christmas day would be among the days of the past. Christmas!—what a Christmas! Well, there was no use of waiting. He had come into that house, he scarce knew how; if they were to thrust him forth again, it had best be done at once; and he moved to the door of the back room and entered.

Oh, well, then he was insane, as he had long believed. There, in his father's room, at midnight, the fire was roaring and the gas blazing; the papers, the sacred papers—to lay a hand on which was criminal—had all been taken off and piled along the floor; a cloth was spread, and a supper laid, upon the business table; and in his father's chair a woman, habited like a nun, sat eating. As he appeared in the doorway the nun rose, gave a low cry, and stood staring. She was a woman, strong, calm, a little masculine, her features marked with courage and good sense, and as John blinked back at her a faint resemblance dodged about his memory, as when a tune haunts us, and yet will not be recalled.

"Why, it's John!" cried the nun. "I dare say I'm mad," said John, unconsciously following King Lear; "but, upon my word, I do believe you're Flora."

And yet it is not Flora at all, thought John. Flora was slender, and timid, and of changing color, and dowy-eyed; and had Flora such an Edinburgh accent? But he said none of these things, which was perhaps as well. What he said was "Then why are you a nun?"

"Such nonsense!" said Flora. "I'm a sick nurse; and I am here nursing your sister, with whom, between you

and me, there is precious little the matter. But that is not the question. The point is: How do you come here, and are you not ashamed to show yourself?"

"Flora," said John sepulchrally, "I haven't taken anything for three days. Or, at least, I don't know what day it is; but I guess I'm starving."

"You unhappy man!" she cried. "Here, sit down and eat my supper; and I'll just run upstairs and see my patient, not but what I doubt she's fast asleep; for Maria is a malade imaginaire."

With this specimen of the French, not of Stratford-upon-Avon, but of a finishing establishment in Moray days, she left John alone in his father's sanctum. He felt at once upon the food; and it is to be supposed that Flora had found her patient wakeful, and been detained with some details of nursing, for he had time to make a full end of all there was to eat, and not only to empty the teapot, but to fill it again from a kettle that was fitfully singing on his father's fire. Then he sat torpid, and pleased and bewildered; his misfortunes were then half forgotten; his mind considering, not without regret, this unsentimental return to his old life.

He was thus engaged, when that bustling woman noiselessly re-entered.

"Have you eaten?" said she. "Then tell me all about it."

It was a long and, as the reader knows, a pitiful story; but Flora heard it with compressed lips. She was lost in none of those questionings of human destiny that have, from time to time, arrested the flight of my own pen; for women, such as she, are no philosophers, and behold the concrete only. And women, such as she, are very hard on the imperfect man.

"Very well," said she, when he had done; "then down upon your knees at once, and beg God's forgiveness."

And the great baby plumped upon his knees, and did as he was bid; and none the worse for that! But while he was heartily enough requesting forgiveness on general principles, the rational side of him distinguished, and wondered if, perhaps the apology were not due upon the other part. And when he rose again from that becoming exercise, he first eyed the face of his old love doubtfully, and then, taking heart, entered his protest.

"I must say, Flora," said he, "in all this business I can see very little fault of mine."

"If you had written home," replied the lady, "there would have been none of it. If you had even gone to Murrayfield reasonably sober, you would never have slept there, and the worst would not have happened. Besides, the whole thing began years ago. You got into trouble, and when your father, honest man, was disappointed, you took the pet, or got afraid, and ran away from punishment. Well, you've had your own way of it, John, and I don't suppose you like it."

"I sometimes fancy I'm not much better than a fool," sighed John.

"My dear John," said she, "not much!"

He looked at her and his eyes fell. A certain anger rose within him; here was Flora he disowned; she was hard; she was of a set color; a settled, mature, undecorative manner; plain of speech, plain of habit—he had come near saying, plain of face. And this changeling called herself by the same name as the many-colored, clinging child of yore; she of the frequent laughter, and the many sighs, and the kind, stolen glances. And to make all worse, she took the upper hand with him, which (as John well knew) was not the true relation of the sexes. He steeled his heart against this sick nurse.

"And how do you come to be here?" he asked.

She told him how she had nursed her father in his long illness, and when he died, and she was left alone, had taken to nursing others, partly from habit, partly to be of some service in the world; partly, it might be, for amusement. "There's no accounting for taste," said she. And she told him how she went largely to the houses of old friends, as the need arose; and how she was thus doubly welcome, as an old friend first, and then as an experienced nurse, to whom doctors would confide the gravest cases.

"And, indeed, it's a mere farce my being here for poor Maria," she continued; "but your father takes her ailment to heart, and I cannot always be refusing him. We are great friends, your father and I; he was very kind to me long ago—ten years ago."

A strange stir came in John's heart. All this while had he been thinking only of himself? All this while, why had he not written to Flora? In penitential tenderness, he took her hand, and to his awe and trouble it remained in his, compliant. A voice told him this was Flora, after all—told him so quietly, yet with a thrill of singing.

"And you never married?" said he. "No, John; I never married," she replied.

The hall clock striking two recalled them to the sense of time.

"And now," said she, "you have been fed and warmed, and I have heard your story, and now it's high time to call your brother."

"Oh!" cried John, chap-fallen; "do you think that absolutely necessary?"

"I can't keep you here; I am a stranger, said she. "Do you want to run away again? I thought you had enough of that."

He bowed his head under the reproach. She despised him, he reflected, as he sat once more alone; a monstrous thing for a woman to despise a man; and strangest of all, she seemed

to like him. Would his brother despise him, too? And would his brother like him?

And presently, the brother appeared, under Flora's escort; and, standing afar off beside the doorway, eyed the hero of this tale.

"So this is you?" he said at length. "Yes, Allick, it's me—it's John," replied the elder brother, feebly.

"And how did you get in here?" inquired the younger.

"Oh, I had my pass-key," says John.

"The deuce you had!" said Alexander. "Ah, you lived in a better world! There are no pass-keys going now."

"Well, father was always averse to them," sighed John. And the conversation then broke down, and the brothers looked askance at one another in silence.

"Well, and what the devil are we to do?" said Alexander. "I suppose if the authorities got wind of you, you would be taken up?"

"It depends on whether they've found the body or not," returned John. "And then there's that cabman, to be sure!"

"Oh, bother the body!" said Alexander. "I mean about the 'other thing.' That's serious."

"Is that what my father spoke about?" asked John. "I don't even know what it is."

"About your robbing your bank in California, of course," replied Alexander.

It was plain, from Flora's face, that this was the first she had heard of it; it was plainer still, from John's, that he was innocent.

"I!" he exclaimed. "I rob my bank? My God! Flora, this is too much; even you must allow that."

"Meaning you didn't?" asked Alexander.

"I never robbed a soul in all my days," cried John; "except my father, if you call that robbery; and I brought him back the money in this room, and he wouldn't even take it."

"Look here, John," said his brother; "let us have no misunderstanding upon this. Macewen saw my father; he told him a bank you had worked for in San Francisco was working over the habitable globe to have you collared—that it was supposed had nipped thousands, and it was dead certain you had nipped three hundred. So Macewen said, and I wish you would be careful how you answer. I may tell you, also, that your father paid the three hundred on the spot."

"Three hundred?" repeated John. "Three hundred pounds, you mean? That's fifteen hundred dollars. Why, then, it's Kirkman!" he broke out.

"Thank heaven! I can explain all that. I gave them to Kirkman to pay it for me the night before I left—fifteen hundred dollars and a letter to the manager. What do they suppose I would steal fifteen hundred dollars for? I'm rich; I struck it rich in stocks. It's the silliest stuff I ever heard of. All that's needful is to cable to the manager; Kirkman has the fifteen hundred—find Kirkman. He was a fellow-clerk of mine, and a hard case; but, to do him justice, I didn't think he was as hard as this."

"And what do you say to that, Allick?" asked Flora.

"I say the cablegram shall go to-night!" cried Alexander, with energy. "Answer prepaid, too. If this thing can be cleared away—and upon my word I do believe it can—we shall be able to hold up our heads again. Here, you John, you stick down the address of your bank manager. You, Flora, you can pack John into my bed, for which I have no further use to-night. As for me, I am off to the postoffice, and thence to the High street about the dead body. The police ought to know, you see, and they ought to know through John; and I can tell them some rigmarole about my brother being a man of highly nervous organization, and the rest of it. And then, I'll tell you what, John—did you notice the name upon the cab?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Value of the Shilling.
We know that in Shakespeare's day—say A. D. 1600—six pence a day was a fortune for any workman—say the equivalent of £10 per annum. A century earlier, before the access to America was open to English explorers, one of the Ardens of Warwickshire left an annuity of forty shillings per annum to a younger son, probably the poet's great-granduncle. Then, if six pence a day would now be the equivalent of twenty shillings a week, then twenty shillings per annum would equate to £120 of present values. Valid facts in minor details can be gleaned from the late Professor Thorold Rogers' "History of Agriculture and Prices."—Notes and Queries.

The Stage in Shakespeare's Day.
In Shakespeare's day there was no scenery used on the stage; the only decorations were tapestries and curtains. In those days the actors and actresses had to do more than merely repeat their lines; they had to supply the scenic effect—what little there was—as well as the action of the performance. They had no races with real horses and a moving panorama, nor any saw mill, with a real buzz saw and real logs, to fall back upon. The effect of the situation was not helped out by any real water and real ice floating on it, and realism as represented by live bloodhounds and reformed burglars and ex-convicts was unknown.

Breaking Bread.
Charlie, sadly—Since you've been married, Tom, you never ask me to break bread with you.

Tom—There's a good reason for it, old fellow. You couldn't break the bread we have at our house; you couldn't do more than bend it.

JOINT RESOLUTIONS.

To be Voted Upon at the Spring Election,
Monday, April 3, 1893.

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 9.

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN, That an amendment to section nine of article four of the constitution of this state be and the same is hereby proposed to read as follows:

SECTION 9. The state shall not be a party to or interested in any contract for the improvement, nor engaged in carrying on any such work, except in the expenditure of grants of the state of land and water, and the secretary of state is hereby required to give notice of the same to the sheriffs of the several counties of this state at least ten days prior to said election, and the said sheriffs are required to give the several notices required by law for general elections. And it shall be the duty of the several boards of election commissioners in this state, in pursuance of the provisions of the constitution, to have printed thereon the words, "Amendment to the constitution of the state of Michigan, to be voted upon at the next spring election, to be held on the first Monday in April, in the year 1893, and the secretary of state is hereby required to give notice of the same to the sheriffs of the several counties of this state at least ten days prior to said election, and the said sheriffs are required to give the several notices required by law for general elections. 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And it shall be the duty of the several boards of election commissioners in this state, in pursuance of the provisions of the constitution, to have printed thereon the words, "Amendment to the constitution of the state of Michigan, to be voted upon at the next spring election, to be held on the first Monday in April, in the year 1893, and the secretary of state is hereby required to give notice of the same to the sheriffs of the several counties of this state at least ten days prior to said election, and the said sheriffs are required to give the several notices required by law for general elections. And it shall be the duty of the several boards of election commissioners in this state, in pursuance of the provisions of the constitution, to have printed thereon the words, "Amendment to the constitution of the state of Michigan, to be voted upon at the next spring election, to be held on the first Monday in April, in the year 1893, and the secretary of state is hereby required to give notice of the same to the sheriffs of the several counties of this state at least ten days prior to said election, and the said sheriffs are required to give the several notices required by law for general elections. And it shall be the duty of the several boards of election commissioners in this state, in pursuance of the provisions of the constitution, to have printed thereon the words, "Amendment to the constitution of the state of Michigan, to be voted upon at the next spring election, to be held on the first Monday in April, in the year 1893, and the secretary of state is hereby required to give notice of the same to the sheriffs of the several counties of this state at least ten days prior to said election, and the said sheriffs are required to give the several notices required by law for general elections. And it shall be the duty of the several boards of election commissioners in this state, in pursuance of the provisions of the constitution, to have printed thereon the words, "Amendment to the constitution of the state of Michigan, to be voted upon at the next spring election, to be held on the first Monday in April, in the year 1893, and the secretary of state is hereby required to give notice of the same to the sheriffs of the several counties of this state at least ten days prior to said election, and the said sheriffs are required to give the several notices required by law for general elections. And it shall be the duty of the several boards of election commissioners in this state, in pursuance of the provisions of the constitution, to have printed thereon the words, "Amendment to the constitution of the state of Michigan, to be voted upon at the next spring election, to be held on the first Monday in April, in the year 1893, and the secretary of state is hereby required to give notice of the same to the sheriffs of the several counties of this state at least ten days prior to said election, and the said sheriffs are required to give the several notices required by law for general elections. And it shall be the duty of the several boards of election commissioners in this state, in pursuance of the provisions of the constitution, to have printed thereon the words, "Amendment to the constitution of the state of Michigan, to be voted upon at the next spring election, to be held on the first Monday in April, in the year 1893, and the secretary of state is hereby required to give notice of the same to the sheriffs of the several counties of this state at least ten days prior to said election, and the said sheriffs are required to give the several notices required by law for general elections. 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